

Mr. Russell as a religious teacher

by G. H. Hardy

I HAVE UNDERTAKEN to write about Mr. Russell's views upon religion;¹ but it is not unlikely that the greater part of what I say will have less to do with Mr. Russell's views than with those of other people, and in particular with Dr. MacTaggart's and my own. This will not be because I think our own views more interesting than Mr. Russell's. As regards my own views, indeed, such an opinion would be ridiculous, for my own views are merely the commonplaces of the ordinary educated atheist. Religion is not a subject on which I can profess to have spent much thought. I have always taken what is, no doubt, a narrow view about religion. I have understood by religion a body of doctrine more or less resembling that which is preached by the Christian churches. To refute the arguments by which such doctrines have been supported is a dialectical exercise of the most elementary kind. This exercise I performed to my own satisfaction when at school, and there my interest in the matter has ended. It would be absurd to suppose that the recapitulation of such a process could have any

¹ This paper was first read to a society whose members could be assumed to be in general agreement with me on most of the questions discussed. I do not, of course, expect the same agreement from the readers of the *Cambridge Magazine*. It was written before the war; and I should have wished, if I had revised it, to alter many of the allusions to Mr. Russell on the one hand and to Dr. MacTaggart on the other. As I have no time to rewrite it, I have left it practically as it was written originally.

conceivable interest for anybody here. Mr. Russell's views about religion, on the other hand, are exceedingly individual; they seem to me most interesting, and they ought, I think, to afford an excellent subject for discussion.

It was therefore my first intention to make my paper a simple account of what Mr. Russell has said about religion, with the addition of such criticisms as might occur to me. I hoped in this way to avoid the repetition of anything which the Society might naturally be disposed to take for granted; and as Mr. Russell has not written a great deal upon the subject, two articles in all, amounting together to about thirty pages, I hoped to find my task a comparatively easy one. But I soon found that I had made a serious mistake. Mr. Russell, when he writes about religion, is terribly difficult. I do not mean this as a reproach. I do not usually find Mr. Russell a difficult author, and when, as has occasionally happened, I have found him difficult, it has generally been clear to me that the difficulty which I experienced lay not in his language but in what he was trying to express: and so, no doubt, it is in this case. Religion, as Mr. Russell conceives it, is intrinsically difficult, as difficult as religion, as I have conceived it, is easy. When we leave behind us the ordinary religion of the churches, and consider all the wider and vaguer states of thought and feeling which may conceivably be called religious, we find ourselves faced by a great mass of material, which it is difficult even to see clearly and which it seems to be almost impossible to express, which can only be realized by the most careful introspection and examination of the personal experience of ourselves and others, and which, if it can be expressed at all, can only be expressed indirectly and by suggestion. If then I find Mr. Russell difficult, if I am sometimes in doubt as to what he means, and if I find that he says many things about which I can only say that I do not know whether I agree with them or not, that is after all precisely what I ought to have expected.

There is, however, another and a more special reason which helps to account for the peculiar difficulty that I find in the article in the *Hibbert Journal* which, in the main, I propose to take as my text. The public to which the *Hibbert Journal* primarily appeals is a very different one from that which usually studies Mr. Russell's writings; and Mr. Russell, addressing a different audience from that to which he is accustomed, sometimes uses language of a kind

which is, no doubt, that which they are likely to find the easiest to understand, but which has for us such different associations that we are bound to find it very perplexing. I will give one instance only. When Mr. Russell says that the essence of religion lies in the subordination of the finite part of our life to the infinite part, he is using a form of words which I suppose that every clergyman in the country has used a hundred times before him: and it is only natural that, however certain I may be that Mr. Russell's interpretation of the phrase is one which deserves to be treated with seriousness and respect, I should find it difficult to dissociate his language from its more familiar setting. The same problem presents itself to me in other passages of Mr. Russell's article. In any case, and whatever the reasons, the difficulties of the article seem to me to be so great that some preface is essential before we proceed to consider its substance more closely; and I shall therefore begin with a few general remarks which, however trite they may seem, will at any rate serve to clear the ground.

Mr. Russell's religion claims to be entirely undogmatic. Dr. MacTaggart, on the other hand, has maintained with great force that dogma is essential to religion. "Dogma", he says, "is not religion, any more than the skeleton is the living body. But we can no more be religious without dogma than our bodies could live without their skeletons."

Dr. MacTaggart has, with characteristic courage, given exact definitions of metaphysics, dogma, religion, and religious dogma. I propose to accept his definition of dogma as sufficient, at any rate, for the purposes of this discussion. "By metaphysics", he says, "I mean the systematic study of the ultimate nature of reality, and by dogma I mean any proposition which has a metaphysical significance." Thus that God exists, that matter exists, that the universe is good on the whole, are dogmas. Dr. MacTaggart then proceeds to distinguish between religious and non-religious dogmas. His distinction naturally depends upon his definition of religion, which I do not wish to consider just yet. I propose to put forward instead another distinction which differs to some extent from his. This distinction is avowedly of the roughest and most provisional kind, and claims no merit whatever except that it may be useful for my immediate purpose.

I shall call *specifically religious dogmas* such propositions as are in

general accepted by such men, and only by such men, as would generally be held to profess some definite religious creed. This definition is of course exceedingly vague. There are many doctrines, such, for example, as the doctrine of personal immortality, about which it would be very hard to say whether they are specifically religious or not. Further, if a particular doctrine were mentioned to me, and I were asked to say whether or no I regarded it as specifically religious, it is extremely likely that I should be seriously embarrassed by my almost complete ignorance of religious systems other than Christianity. But these difficulties do not concern me. There *are* doctrines which are specifically religious, and others which are not so; and among the latter there are doctrines which by some writers, and in particular by Dr. MacTaggart, would be called religious. This, I think, is quite plain; and it is sufficient for my purpose.

Let us take, for example, the doctrine that the universe is on the whole good. Dr. MacTaggart would call this a religious dogma; indeed for him it is the irreducible dogmatic minimum of religion. But it is not, in my sense, specifically religious. It has been held by many people—by Matthew Arnold, for example, and, I suppose, by Dr. MacTaggart himself—who may have been, in some deeper sense of the word, more religious than any Christian, but have certainly not been religious in the sense in which the word is commonly used by the ordinary man.

On the other hand, the typical example of what I *should* call a specifically religious dogma is that of the existence of a personal God. It will be worth while, I think, to define what I understand by this doctrine a little more closely. When I say that a man believes in God I imply that he believes this much *at least*. First, that there is at least one being who is not an animal or a man or any combination, finite or infinite, of animals or men. Secondly, that this being exists, in the sense in which the sun and moon and you and I exist, and Hamlet and Mr. Collins do not and never did exist. Thirdly, that this being has a mind, which is one mind, in a sense which to some extent resembles that in which you and I have minds, each of which is one mind. If a man denies any of these propositions, I deny that he believes in God; and I think that belief in God, as thus defined, is a fair instance of belief in a specifically religious dogma. It is, of course, easy to find more extreme in-

stances, such as the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Trinity, or the Infallibility of the Pope.

Specifically religious dogmas, as I have defined them, have an important characteristic, namely that of being false. About this I shall assume that we agree. We do not suspend judgment about such doctrines; we reject them as unfounded. To put it more precisely, we regard them as possessing an exceedingly high degree of improbability. It would be an interesting, but rather difficult, problem to estimate roughly how high this degree of improbability is. It is sufficient to say that it is high enough to ensure that, in practical life, it would not occur to us to take them into account. It seems to me, for example, not less improbable that there is a God than that there is a tiger in the next room, or that Mr. Russell is a German spy. The degree of improbability is in any case so high that it is a clear waste of trouble to attempt to discriminate between one such doctrine and another. It may be less unlikely that the tiger in the next room is of the Indian than of the Brazilian variety; the question is worthy of our attention only in our more trivial moods.

I have said all this, knowing very well that it is not novel or particularly interesting. It seems to me important that we should have it clearly in our minds when we try to estimate what Dr. MacTaggart and Mr. Russell tell us about religion; and there is another point also which it is important that we should keep before us. Not only are all these doctrines untrue, but it is becoming more and more generally recognized that they are untrue. It has been admitted even by Heads of Houses. Speaking for myself—and I do not know that Dr. MacTaggart or Mr. Russell would disagree with me—I should regard it as highly probable that, in another 100 years, belief in anything fairly recognizable as Christianity will be practically extinct, except perhaps among savage races. Further, I should imagine that the world will, on the whole, be a good deal the better for the change. And here too I have no reason for supposing that Dr. MacTaggart or Mr. Russell would dissent.

We must put aside then, as dead and done with, all forms of religion which, like Christianity, Unitarianism, or Judaism, involve the acceptance of specifically religious dogmas. A question occurs at once which seems to me decidedly more interesting. These creeds are after all what the plain man calls religion. When

we have discarded what the plain man calls religion, is there anything left to which it is appropriate and profitable to give the name of religion at all?

This may appear to be merely a verbal question, and in a sense it is. It does not follow from this that the question is uninteresting or unimportant. A great deal of philosophical discussion is bound to be discussion of what appear to be verbal questions, even when the differences which separate the disputants are substantial differences and not merely differences concerning the proper use of words.

This may be seen at once in this particular instance. Mr. Russell, while, like the rest of us, rejecting all ordinary forms of religious belief, is anxious to keep a religion; and like all unbelievers who wish to keep a religion, he wishes to call religious certain classes of emotional states which he experiences. If I were to object—I do not wish to prejudge the question by saying that I *do* object—that the word did not seem to me the right one, the question between us would seem to be a verbal question. It is not unlikely that I also experience emotional states resembling his. If he prefers to call them religious, and I prefer not to, what can it matter? We all do, in ordinary life, use words like “religion” very loosely. To *A* his work is his religion; *B* worships money; to *C* his belly is his God.

But it is quite certain that, if I were to attack Mr. Russell’s use of the word “religion”, the discussion between us would very soon cease to be in any sense a verbal one. Mr. Russell would justify his use of the word on some such grounds as these. He would urge, I suppose, that the elements which are really characteristic and valuable in the traditional religions are, not the specific doctrines which we agree in rejecting, but vaguer beliefs, and still more feelings, which underlie them, feelings, to use his own words, “so deep and so instinctive as to remain unknown to those whose lives are built upon them”. Finally, he would say that it is just these feelings which, if not identical with, have at any rate a great deal in common with, those which he experiences himself and which he calls religious. Whether his views about these questions are right or wrong, the questions are questions of fact and not of words.

Bearing this in mind, we may return to what I will call the plain man’s views of religion. I have already explained that I know

nothing of non-Christian systems; and so, in order to avoid elaborate and unessential reservations, I will leave them out of account, and say “plain man” when I mean “the plain European of the present day”. I can then state the plain man’s position roughly but simply thus. Religion, anything that can appropriately and profitably be called religion, whatever else it may or may not involve, involves a belief in God. I do not wish to commit myself now so far as to say that this is my own view. It would obviously be very rash to do so until I have examined a little more closely the wider views of Dr. MacTaggart and Mr. Russell. But it is the view which I have in the past adopted; and I still regard it with a good deal of sympathy, and think that it certainly deserves very serious consideration.

Religion, if we accept this view, involves the acceptance as true of certain propositions. I need hardly explain that no one now proposes to *identify* the acceptance of these propositions with religion. There may have been, for all I know, theologians who have held that religion simply meant belief in certain creeds. It is safe to say that no one, from Dr. MacTaggart to the Bishop of Kensington, would put forward such a view today. The plain man now would deny the epithet “religious” to Shelley or to Swinburne, to Dr. MacTaggart or Mr. Russell, however much they might hunger for it, because they do not believe in God; but he would not necessarily call Voltaire religious because he did. He would agree with Dr. MacTaggart, with Mr. Russell, with everybody indeed who writes about religion, that, whether an element of belief is or is not necessary to religion, an element of feeling is at least equally essential, and that this element of feeling lies in some sort of emotional attitude towards the universe as a whole or certain sides of it. This is common ground among all writers upon religion, and may safely be accepted as uncontroversial.

Let us take Dr. MacTaggart, for example. Dr. MacTaggart, as is his custom, defines religion boldly and concisely. Religion, he says, “may best be described as an emotion resting on a conviction of a harmony between ourselves and the universe at large”. It is clear that, if we take this definition literally, it is in some respects too wide. It is obviously necessary to add some sort of limitation of the character of the emotion. I completed my proof of the reality of the harmony, let us suppose, this morning, and I survey it with a

pardonable glow of intellectual pride; or with a sense of cynical amusement at the ignorance and perversity of other philosophers; or with savage irritation that I published fallacious arguments to the contrary a week ago. My emotions are natural and excusable; but no one would call them religious; and yet I think they fall quite fairly under the words of Dr. MacTaggart's definition.

At the same time it would certainly not be fair to press a point like this against Dr. MacTaggart. It is perfectly clear from his whole discussion of the subject that, when he says emotion, he means emotion of a particular kind. He never states in set terms what, from a purely psychological point of view, an emotion must be like before it can claim the title of religious. But my impression is that about this he, and Mr. Russell, and the ordinary man, would, up to a certain point at any rate, be in fairly close agreement. They would all, I think, accept the picturesque summary of the matter which I quote from William James.

"For common men", says James, "religion, whatever more special meanings it may have, signifies always a serious state of mind. It favours gravity, not pertness; it says 'hush' to all vain chatter and smart wit.... But, if hostile to light irony, religion is equally hostile to heavy grumbling and complaint.... Melancholy, according to our ordinary use of language, forfeits all title to be called religious when, in Marcus Aurelius's racy words, the sufferer simply lies kicking and screaming after the fashion of a sacrificed pig. The mood of a Schopenhauer or a Nietzsche—and in less degree one may say the same even of our own sad Carlyle—though often an ennobling sadness, is almost as often only peevishness running away with the bit between its teeth. The sallies of the two German authors remind one, half the time, of the sick shriekings of two dying rats. They lack the purgatorial note which religious sadness gives forth.

"There must be something solemn, serious, and tender about any attitude which we denominate religious. If glad, it must not grin or snicker; if sad, it must not scream or curse."

All this, I imagine, Dr. MacTaggart would assent to: and if we agree for shortness to call an emotion which satisfies these conditions a *solemn* emotion, he would probably not object if we substitute "solemn emotion" for "emotion" in his definition.

Of course, Dr. MacTaggart's definition involves further

difficulties. The word "harmony" has always been the despair of everybody but idealist philosophers. I do not myself profess to know what harmony is. It is possible that I might find out by a sufficiently careful study of Dr. MacTaggart's other books. But the point is of no importance. For although Dr. MacTaggart does not tell us what harmony is, he does tell us the *minimum* that it must be held to include. "The minimum harmony required", he says, "to give us an emotion which could be called religion, is that the universe should be judged to be good on the whole." By making this our definition of harmony we can avoid what would certainly be a terribly difficult discussion. I will therefore reword and expand Dr. MacTaggart's definition as follows: "Religion is a solemn emotion directed towards the universe as a whole, and inspired by a conviction that the universe as a whole is good."

Dr. MacTaggart's definition, thus amended, is one which might almost be accepted by the plain man. We have only to replace the words "conviction that the universe as a whole is good" by "belief that there is a God", and we obtain a formula which the plain man would probably consider fairly satisfactory. Is there any reason for preferring Dr. MacTaggart's? I must confess that I can see very little. Indeed it seems to me that, for practical purposes, there is no substantial difference between the two.

The plain man says that religion includes belief in certain doctrines; and these doctrines are false. It follows that, if we accept the plain man's views, we must make up our minds to do without religion. If we accept Dr. MacTaggart's view, it may seem that the case is not so clear. But, assuming that we want a religion, are we really in a very much happier position? Dr. MacTaggart's book supplies the answer.

We may believe that the Universe is good on the whole in various ways. We may believe it, in the first place, on the evidence of inspection; it may seem to us that there is a balance of good over evil in the sum of our experience. How far such a view may be plausible it will not be necessary for us to enquire. Its foundations would be painfully slender, and in any case it is not at all the sort of belief that Dr. MacTaggart means. When Dr. MacTaggart says belief he means dogmatic belief, belief, that is to say, founded upon metaphysics. "We need", he says, "to be able to regard the universe as good on the whole, and it does not appear how we

could do this, except on the basis of a general theory as to the ultimate nature of reality.”

But who believes, in this sense, that the universe is good? In the first place, the people who believe in God. In the second place, a few professional philosophers. It is to them, and to them only, that Dr. MacTaggart's religion can ever hope to appeal; and at present it is dumb even to them, for the necessary proofs are lacking. It is true that Dr. MacTaggart tries to do a little to encourage us. It is possible, he suggests, that the number of professional philosophers may grow larger. “The world's leisure is increasing, and much of it may be devoted to study.” Some of this study may be the study of metaphysics; and so perhaps some day the proofs will be found. Even Dr. MacTaggart, however, recognizes that the process is likely to occupy a considerable time, and I am not surprised when he concludes that “we are confronted here with one of the great tragedies of life”. In the meantime I am not convinced that it is necessary for me to use familiar words in unaccustomed senses in order that possibly, in the distant future, Dr. MacTaggart may be entitled to call himself a religious man.

Mr. Russell, unlike Dr. McTaggart, who merely tells us what his religion might be like if he could find it, really has a religion, and one in which he proposes to enfold us all, Christians and infidels alike.

Mr. Russell claims that his religion is entirely undogmatic. I do not wish to dispute the justice of this claim, but I think that it requires a word or two of explanation.

A religion might, I suppose, claim to be undogmatic on the ground that it was a religion of pure feeling and involved no judgment whatsoever. It might be a religion which consisted of one single, simple thrill, a thrill which even the absolute sceptic might enjoy—the sceptic who does not even know that he knows nothing, and whom Mr. Russell has rescued from the contempt which ages of ignorant prejudice have poured upon him. Whether Mr. Russell's religion is in this sense undogmatic it seems to me a little difficult to say: nor do I wish to discuss the question. For it seems clear to me that, in the hands of the absolute sceptic, even Mr. Russell's religion would prove to be a rudimentary and a barren faith. Moreover, there is another sense in which a religion may be undogmatic, a sense which seems to me far more impor-

tant, and in which, I think, Mr. Russell's claim on behalf of his own religion is clearly justified.

A religion may be undogmatic in the sense that it asserts no dogma concerning the connection of goodness and existence. It is the assertion of such a connection which we have seen to be characteristic of religious dogmas; without it the plain man's religion, Dr. MacTaggart's religion, everything whose claim to call itself a religion we have examined, collapse entirely. In this sense Mr. Russell's religion is, as we shall see, certainly undogmatic. It may be necessary for it that something should exist, or that good and bad should have a meaning; but it is not necessary that anything that exists should be good or bad, or that anything good or bad should have existence.

But there is another point about which it is almost equally important that we should be clear, if we are to sympathize with or understand Mr. Russell. It is in no way necessary to him that the universe should be good, and equally unnecessary, of course, that it should be bad. But there can, I think, be no doubt, to anyone who studied Mr. Russell's writings, that, whatever the logical necessities may be, Mr. Russell's religion does actually rest upon, and draw its inspiration from, the most profound conviction that the universe is unutterably bad. Dr. MacTaggart would not call himself an optimist; I should not even claim to be one myself; but, when I compare our feelings about the universe with Mr. Russell's, they seem to me to glow with domesticity and geniality.

There is a well-known passage in which Dr. MacTaggart has compared the Absolute to a College. Dr. MacTaggart's heaven, I should explain, consists of a considerable number of individual souls, united by an entrancing love which makes each soul all in all to all the rest. Such a system is one of which it is difficult to find an adequate image; and it is possible that Dr. MacTaggart may be right in choosing, as the least unsatisfactory parallel, the life of a College in one of the older English Universities. But in any case I think we may assume that, when Dr. MacTaggart contemplates a College, what impresses him is its snugness and compactness, the comfort and the unity of its corporate life—qualities of which I am not in any way disposed to question the existence or the value, though it is possible that they might be found, in a richer fullness of realization, in a smaller society than this.

Mr. Russell, too, might find in a Cambridge College a not unsatisfactory image of the universe. But it is safe to say that his emotions in regarding it would be very different from Dr. MacTaggart's. What would strike him would be its immensity, its coldness, and its aloofness; the incongruity of its constituents; the intricate ill-adjustment and wastefulness of its machinery; the stammering incoherence of the lecturers; the impotent triviality of the tutors and the deans; the crowds of arrogant and elegantly dressed young men, who are nothing to him, and to whom he is nothing: it is to these that Mr. Russell would turn, to feel what it is to be a member of a great College. In a word, while Dr. MacTaggart might be nearer heaven in some smaller society, Mr. Russell's religion is essentially that of a Trinity man.

I have chosen what may perhaps seem to be a frivolous illustration. But I do not think that it gives an unfair picture of what, on a larger scale, Mr. Russell's universe is like. It is in the feelings with which this universe inspires us that Mr. Russell finds his religion, a religion which is, he says, to preserve all the elements that are of most value in Christianity. "There are", he says "in Christianity three elements which it is desirable to preserve if possible: worship, acquiescence, and love.... These, in the form in which they appear in Christianity, depend upon belief in God, and are therefore no longer possible to those who cannot entertain this belief. Something, in worship, must be lost when we lose belief.... But much can be preserved, and what can be preserved seems sufficient to constitute a very strong religious life. Acquiescence, also, is rendered more difficult by loss of belief.... But it is not rendered impossible; and in consequence of its greater difficulty it becomes, when achieved, more filled by self-surrender than any acquiescence which Christianity produces. In some ways, therefore, the religion which has no dogma is greater and more religious than one which rests upon the belief that in the end our ideals are fulfilled in the outer world."

A complete analysis of Mr. Russell's religion would consist of the answers to two questions. We are to experience certain emotions—emotions towards what? and what kind of emotions? The answer to the first question depends, in the main, on what Mr. Russell means by "worship", and the answer to the second on what he means by "acquiescence" and by "love". I propose to

confine myself almost entirely to the first question. It is here, I think, that we find what is really individual and characteristic in Mr. Russell's position. Moreover, if we can answer the first, we shall, I think, have gone a very long way towards answering the second as well.

What, then, does Mr. Russell mean by worship? Worship, we must remember, is to take the place of what men ordinarily call worship; and clearly this is something complicated, vague, and variable, differing from time to time and from man to man. Mr. Russell, therefore, does not attempt to give an accurate definition. But he singles out certain elements which he regards as vital. "Three things," he says, "contemplation with joy, reverence, and sense of mystery, seem essential to constitute any of the higher forms of worship"; and I think we may agree that these are necessary elements in a state of mind which can reasonably be described as religious.

So far, I think, Mr. Russell has said nothing which is likely to arouse any very serious difference of opinion, nothing which Dr. MacTaggart or the plain man might not cheerfully accept. It is at this point that he proceeds to the distinctions which differentiate his religion from all others. He distinguishes, in the first place, between what he calls *selective* and *impartial* worship; selective worship which demands that its object shall be good, and impartial worship which does not. This distinction is the most important of all in Mr. Russell's discussion of the subject; and I must say something about each kind of worship in turn. But selective worship I will dismiss as shortly as I can; for here too I do not think that Mr. Russell says anything which we need regard as very highly controversial.

Selective worship is worship of the good; but here again we must distinguish. There are two kinds of selective worship, worship of the actual existent good and worship of the ideal good. In Christian worship the two may be combined, for the God of Christianity is conceived both as existent and as the embodiment of the ideal.

In all this there is one point only which seems to call for discussion here, and that is the amount of stress which Mr. Russell lays on worship of the non-existent or ideal. Mr. Russell's opinion of the existent universe is so uncharitable that it hardly comes as a

surprise when we find him, in the end, putting aside almost entirely worship of the real good, and sinking himself in the world of universals. Now it has, I believe, been held that nothing can be good save actual mental states. I mention this view, which would of course at once almost destroy one side of Mr. Russell's religion, only to dismiss it as plainly contradicting common sense. When we say that "so and so's ideals are good", we must mean something. But there *are* difficulties which I should desire to see cleared up. *What* is it, in the world of universals, that is good? It is clear, in the first place, that it is not the universal "good" itself: it is impossible to worship what can only be written in inverted commas. It would seem, then, that what is good must be some combination of universals, something which resembles particulars in every respect except existence. Is, for example, the world of *War and Peace* good or bad, as the actual world is good or bad? Or was Romeo's love for Juliet good? Common sense, I think, says *Yes*. But what Romeo's love for Juliet was seems to me an uncommonly difficult question. Examined in the light of Mr. Russell's theory of denoting, it appears the most unsubstantial of shadows.

But these are merely logical difficulties which I have very little doubt that Mr. Russell can dispel, and which I have in any case no desire to press. I am fully convinced that it is possible to worship the ideal good, and what I wish to say is merely this. In the first place, there is one point in which my judgment of ethical values does differ seriously from Mr. Russell's. Existence means to me much more than it does to him; it seems to me indeed an essential factor in most of the highest goods. I should consider, for example, that a very halting affection for a very imperfect friend, who has at any rate the saving merit of existence, may be far more valuable than the most perfect love of a purely imaginary God. I should therefore differ from Mr. Russell in attaching far greater relative importance to the worship of the real.

In the second place, I cannot think that, in the absence of dogma, selective worship can reasonably be called religion; for it is obvious that we are all religious, if this is all religion is to mean. But this is a point on which I need not insist, for Mr. Russell, though for different reasons, seems to accept the conclusion. "The dualism of good and bad," he says, "when it is too strongly present to our minds, prevents impartial contemplation and interferes

with universal love and worship." There is, in selective worship, "something finite and unduly human". It does not produce a "sense of union with the actual world". For this purpose we need "the kind of worship which is only given to what exists". It is here that we first come into contact with the real kernel of Mr. Russell's religion: and it is here that my real difficulties begin.

It is quite possible that I may have failed entirely to understand what it is that Mr. Russell means by "impartial worship". If I am sceptical about its supreme value, this may be the explanation. I do not myself believe that this is so; I think that I *can* understand the states of mind that Mr. Russell describes, and, from my own experience, recognize their existence. But anything that I attempt to say about them must be subject to two reservations. In the first place, I may be quite mistaken. I know that there are emotions, many, for example, of the emotions inspired by music, which I am almost, if not quite, incapable of experiencing. It is possible that Mr. Russell and I are simply talking about different things. And, in the second place, even if our misunderstanding be not quite so absolute as this, it is quite likely that these particular emotions have, in Mr. Russell, a very different value from that which they seem to have in me. It would be neither sound philosophy nor good manners that I should deny the value of Mr. Russell's feelings. Naturally I can only answer for my own.

"Impartial worship" then, is an emotion felt towards what exists as such. It is a feeling of union, in some sense or other, with the actual world. Such a state of mind is, of course, a commonplace with the poets. I am no poet, and to give a description of it is beyond my powers. But it has, I think, certain fairly obvious characteristics which may help me to suggest it.

It is generally—in my own experience I think I might say solely—associated with material objects, and involves a feeling of closer contact than usual with these objects. It is most commonly excited by the sense of sight, though sometimes by other senses; but always by something which seems mysterious and big, the Indus cutting its way through the desert, the rumble of the Scotch express, the lights of St. Pancras station.

Darkness, rain, fog, obscurity in general, are favourable to it. Physical and intellectual lassitude also encourage it. Alcohol and tobacco may be powerful stimulating factors. But discomfort or

worry are fatal to it, and it is quickly dispelled by any deliberate process of reflection.

It is closely associated with, and often very difficult to disentangle from, aesthetic contemplation. The objects which excite it have, as a rule, a considerable degree of beauty. But the intensity of the feeling is in no way proportional to the beauty of the object. Beauty which is not limited by existence, such as the beauty of mathematics, does not even suggest it; and even among material objects there are many which are very beautiful and which do not arouse it at all. Sunshine in an orchard is quite as ineffective as would be a dunghill covered with flies. "Impartial worship", then, is not, in any ordinary sense of the words, a state of aesthetic emotion. Still less is it a state of ethical emotion. It involves no judgment whatsoever as to the goodness or badness of its object. On this point at any rate I am in agreement with Mr. Russell.

Finally, one of the most important elements in the state of mind I am trying to suggest is, I think, a feeling of tragedy, but of a tragedy which, as Mr. Russell says, is "acquiesced in" and has ceased to trouble us. It is a painless tragedy, but it is equally essential that it should be a real one. It is easy to imagine far more tragic worlds than this, worlds full of vices that no tyrant has indulged and blunders that no philosopher has succeeded in committing; and in such a world we might acquiesce, as easily as we might endure an imaginary toothache. The tragedy which we feel in "impartial worship" is as real as the real toothache and as painless as that of our imagination.

Such, then, are the feelings which are suggested to me by Mr. Russell's description of "impartial worship". It seems to me beyond question that his and mine have at any rate a good deal in common; and yet I am afraid that mine must be a mere travesty of his. For Mr. Russell can elevate his into a religion, and I most certainly cannot. I will state my reasons shortly and dogmatically.

In the first place, I am very doubtful as to whether there is really very much in common between this feeling of impartial worship and anything that religion, at any rate in Christian countries, has generally been held to include. This point, however, I will not argue, for it would demand a far more intimate knowledge of religious psychology than I possess.

In the second place, and this is far more important, I am

altogether sceptical as to the transcendent value of the emotion in itself. I do not wish to deny that it has some, perhaps considerable, value. But I shall not call it religious until I am convinced that, either by itself or in union with other emotions, it possesses that supreme degree of value that has been claimed for what has usually been called religious feeling; and this I am at present simply unable to believe. In some ways I should very much like to believe it. The feeling, whatever its value, is extraordinarily pleasant. The heaven, if it really is one, is a comfortable heaven; and this is not its only advantage. It required a long and painful struggle to reach the Christian heaven, a struggle, we are told, particularly hard for those who are comparatively well to do. The man who sets out to this one will find it an advantage to be warmly clothed and to carry a little money in his pocket; but the price is not unreasonable, and he need go no further than the refreshment room at the nearest terminus. It is a heaven like a garden city, designed expressly for the man of moderate means. It is possible that my judgment of its value may be obscured by a quite unreasoning prejudice against believing that such great goods can lie so near and be so easily accessible.

This remark leads me naturally to an admission with which I wish to end my paper. I recognize the strong probability that my whole attitude towards Mr. Russell's religion is warped by unconquerable prejudice. I do not profess to be unprejudiced about religion. If I reject this opportunity of finding one, if I range myself with the plain man against Mr. Russell, it is no doubt very largely simply because I do not want to have one. I hate the word and all its associations. But I am frightened by Mr. Russell. I read what Mr. Russell says, and much of it seems to me to be true; and I begin to wonder whether I am not religious after all. And then I seem to feel again on my head the touch of the bishop who confirmed me, and to hear a new note of triumph in his voice as he says "I told you so". If therefore I am told that my attitude towards Mr. Russell's religion is unsympathetic, I shall hardly be able to deny it. But I can fairly plead, I think, that it is not because I am naturally unsympathetic towards serious thought about serious things, or in any way disposed to be flippant in its presence. It is because I am, in sober earnest, terribly nervous lest, willingly or unwillingly, Mr. Russell should fasten a religion upon me.